

Lesson 9: Creating Effective Practice Sessions

EBCS Level 2 CPD – Advanced Coach as Mentor

Learning Objectives (for the coach)

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Plan and structure purposeful bowls practice sessions.
- Balance technical, tactical, and psychological elements in training.
- Design progressive drills that build skill and transfer to match play.
- Use metrics (MAE, grouping, scoring) to measure improvement.
- Adapt sessions for different player needs, roles, and team formats.

Background (why this matters)

Random, unfocused practice rarely leads to lasting improvement. Effective practice sessions are structured, progressive, and measurable. Coaches should:

- Begin with clear objectives (technical, tactical, or mental).
- Include a mix of blocked practice (repetition) and variable practice (game-like).
- Build intensity gradually from warm-up to competition simulation.
- Incorporate feedback and questioning to aid learning.
- Keep sessions inclusive, engaging, and relevant to match demands.

Practical Activities

Sample Session Templates:

1) 60-Minute Technical Focus Session:

- Warm-up (roll-ups, stretching) – 10 min
- Technical drill (e.g., landing-spot accuracy) – 20 min
- Grouping test with feedback – 20 min
- Review and reflection – 10 min

2) 90-Minute Mixed Skills Session:

- Warm-up – 10 min
- Technical drill (e.g., release gate, rhythm) – 20 min
- Tactical scenario play (e.g., head building) – 30 min
- Pressure drill (scoring challenge, countdown) – 20 min
- Reflection/discussion – 10 min

3) Team Practice Session (Triples/Fours, 2 hours):

- Team warm-up and role briefing – 15 min
- Communication drill (Silent End, Role-Swap) – 20 min
- Tactical end simulations (defend lead, chase game) – 40 min
- Match-play with set objectives – 35 min
- Team review and homework – 10 min

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Other Practice Design Tools:

- Use scoreboards for practice challenges to mimic competition.
- Introduce targets (cones, discs) for technical drills.
- Record MAE or grouping results for player progress tracking.
- Alternate fun games and serious drills to maintain engagement.

Questioning Prompts

- 'What was today's main focus and how did it help?'
- 'What part of the session challenged you most?'
- 'How did the drill link to a real match situation?'
- 'What evidence shows you improved today?'
- 'What will you practise again before your next match?'

Coach Notes (ethics, inclusivity, safety)

- Set objectives appropriate to age and experience.
- Ensure practice is fun as well as purposeful.
- Be inclusive: adapt sessions for mixed abilities, juniors, or less mobile players.
- Use questioning and feedback constructively.
- Keep safety in mind when using props or timed drills.

Reflection (self + peer)

Coach self-reflection:

- Did I plan a balanced session (technical/tactical/mental)?
- Were players engaged and challenged at the right level?
- Did I provide evidence of improvement through metrics or feedback?
- How did players respond to structured vs game-like drills?

Peer feedback:

- 'I noticed you structured practice by... (specific). This worked when... (evidence). Next time you could... (suggestion).'

Player homework:

- Write down one strength and one area to practise before the next match.
- Track progress in grouping/MAE drills weekly.
- Reflect on which drill felt most match-realistic.

Outcomes (what you should achieve)

- Plan and deliver effective, structured practice sessions.
- Balance technical, tactical, and mental elements in training.



- Apply progressive, measurable drills for skill development.
 - Adapt practices for inclusivity and player needs.
 - Maintain engagement and match relevance in practice design.

Appendix A – Glossary of Coaching Terms

Blocked Practice: Repetitive drills focusing on one skill for consistency.

Variable Practice: Practice with changing conditions to encourage adaptability.

Grouping Test: Delivering multiple bowls to measure consistency of placement.

MAE – Mean Absolute Error: Average distance bowls finish from the target (ignores direction).

Scenario Play: Setting up match-like tactical situations for players to solve.

